

# Incognito

**Kevin Pottie**

The alarm clock rang, but this time I didn't hit the snooze button. I slipped into my Picasso T-shirt and cut-off jeans, bolted out the door and tore off on my bike — incognito — like a nun on a motorcycle.

“Aaal — le — lu — ia! Aaal — le — lu — ia!”

The choir was shaking the stained glass windows as I slipped into the church vestibule. The procession to the altar was about to begin. The priest shot me a heel-cooling look, as if to say, “Is that how you were taught to dress for church?” I wiped away the mud that my bike had kicked up onto my lip.

*That crazy bastard. That crazy bastard walked up to me in the emergency department wearing a red bandana, black leather pants and carrying a motorcycle helmet. “Are you Macdonald?” he says to me.*

*Doc, I didn't know what on God's earth to think.*

“I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.”

As I stood reciting the Apostle's Creed my eyes strayed toward a young woman in the pew in front of me. My glance was left stranded on a dark blotch on the back of her leg. I bent forward to take a closer look. The size, the scalloped border, the dark colours shifting in the morning light screamed malignant melanoma. My missal slipped out of my hand and dropped onto the floor.

*Then motorcycle man says to me, “Well, I'll be operating on you in a few minutes.”*

*“Like hell you will,” I tell him.*

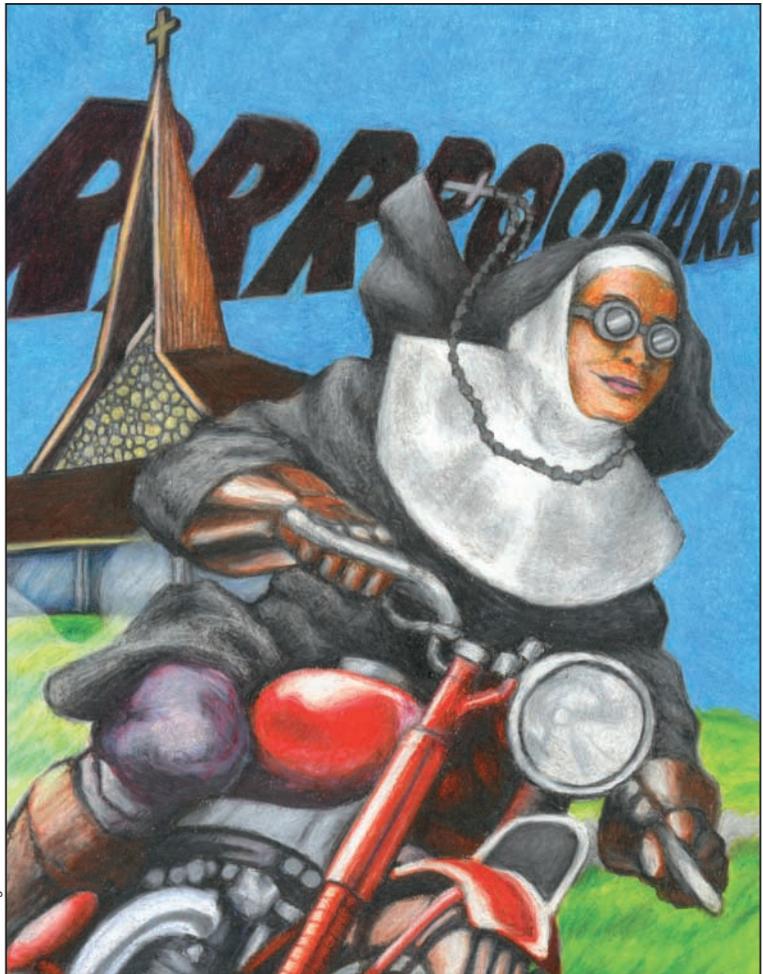
*“Like hell I will or you won't be walking out of here,” he says. “You have a disc pressing up against a nerve in your back. And I'm going in after it.”*

*“Like hell you are,” I tell him.*

*“Like hell I am,” he says.*

*I tell him I want a second opinion. He says there's no time for a second opinion.*

Each shift of her weight, each movement of her leg, revealed another incriminating vantage point.



Andrew Young

“Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us.”

The Mass went on, but now I was participating in voice only until that community-bonding moment when we all shake hands. The young woman in the next pew turned to me. “Peace be with you,” she said, as innocent as a dove.

Lord. Why me? My eyes began to fill with tears as I remembered a patient dying of melanoma, lying in a hospital bed with no treatment other than an 18-gauge needle to take away the litres of malignant abdominal fluid.

*So, Doc, there I was in a baby-blue gown, my butt hair stuck to the sheets and a rubber tube up my penis and motorcycle*

man's telling me he's gonna operate on me. Now, you know me, Doc. I'm a farmer. I'm nothin' without my legs. But I don't much like doctors and this crazy bastard wearing a red bandana is telling me he's gonna cut into my back. Shoot, I didn't know what to do.

"Be not a-fraid ..." The final hymn purred from my throat as I watched her like a cat, determined not to let her slip away uncontested.

The Mass ended. I reached out and placed my hand on her shoulder. "Excuse me. I know we've never met, but I absolutely must speak to you."

She responded with a cautious half-smile.

"I'm a physician," I explained, deepening my voice to make up for my cut-off jeans and mud-riddled helmet. "I couldn't help but notice a rather suspicious-looking mole on your leg. I just couldn't let you leave without advising you to see your doctor immediately."

"Which leg?" she asked. "My God, I hope it's nothing serious."

But it turns out motorcycle man was tellin' the truth. There really was no time for a second opinion. That crazy bastard saved my legs — my life, really.

So, Doc, I wanna live a little longer. I'm here for that check-up you've been suggestin'.

She turned and lifted her dress. My heart pounded as she put her red-painted nail next to the black lesion on her leg. Then, as if flicking a spot of paint, she sent it afloat. We both watched dumbfounded as it fluttered to the floor.

"I'm so embarrassed" she said, raising her hand to her mouth. "I must have kicked up some mud rushing to church this morning."

I blushed back, Picasso red. In my secret relief, I felt happier than ever to be in cut-off jeans and a T-shirt as I slipped away, like a nun on a motorcycle.

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